automatically collecting and analyzing information about the items from the

enterprise databases associated with each of the enterprises by use of a host, the host being in

communication with the enterprises over the network;

storing the information collected from the enterprise databases in a host database, the

information being stored in the host database by the host;

providing a host graphical user interface through which the shoppers can view, over

the network, the information stored in the host database.

5.   The method according to claim 1, wherein collecting information from

enterprise databases includes collecting information from auction sites offering items for

purchase over the network and the enterprise databases comprise auction databases

associated with the auction sites.

8.   The method according to claim 5, wherein collecting information includes

collecting publicly accessible information.

9.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

periodically collecting the information about the items from the enterprise databases,

and

updating the information stored in the host database.

10.   The method according to claim 9, wherein updating the information stored in

the host database comprises updating the information stored in the host database with

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sufficient frequency to enable the shoppers to monitor and participate effectively in bidding

activity at the auction sites.

11.　　The method according to claim 5, further comprising

dynamically scheduling the collecting of information from the auction databases

based upon content of previously collected information.

12.　　The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

enabling the host to receive an auction watch request from the shoppers,

monitoring with the host a bidding activity at a specified auction site with regard to a

specified item in response to the received auction watch request, and

displaying the bidding activity to the shopper by way of the host graphical user

interface.

13.　　The method according to claim 12, further comprising dynamically scheduling

the collecting of information from the auction databases based upon content of previously

collected information.

14.　　The method according to claim 12, further comprising:

enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper an update

request, and

updating at least a portion of the information stored in the host database substantially

in real-time in response to the update requests.

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15.   The method according to claim 12, further comprising:

periodically collecting the information about the items from the enterprise databases,

and

updating the information stored in the host database.

16.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper an update

request, and

updating at least a portion of the information stored in the host database substantially

in real-time in response to the update requests.

17.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper an item watch

request specifying a particular item for monitoring, and

monitoring the auction sites to detect if the specified item becomes available for

bidding at the auction sites in response to the item watch request from the shopper.

18.   The method according to claim 17, further comprising

providing the shopper with notification in response to detecting the specified item

becoming available for bidding, wherein the host provides the notification by way of a host

computer-initiated mechanism different from the host graphical user interface.

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19.   The method according to claim 7, further comprising:

enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper a market watch

request specifying a class of items for monitoring, and

detecting availability of items within the class of items at the auction sites.

20.   The method according to claim 19, further comprising distinguishing between

newly detected ones of the items from previously detected ones of the items.

21.   The method according to claim 19, further comprising

providing the shopper with notification regarding detection of the items within the

class of items, wherein the host provides the notification by way of a host computer-initiated

mechanism different from the host graphical user interface.

22.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising providing the shoppers

with notification of host-based events by way of a host computer-initiated mechanism

different from the host graphical user interface.

23.   The method according to claim 22, wherein the host computer-initiated

mechanism includes a communication mechanism chosen from electronic mail, Internet

messaging, pager, facsimile, telephone, and Web telephone.

24.   The method according to claim 22, wherein the host computer-initiated

mechanism includes providing a hyperlink to the host graphical user interface.

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25.   The method according to claim 5, further comprising:

enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper a host database query specifying a class of items,

searching the host database for items within the class of items, and

displaying auction information with regard to the items within the class of items to the shopper by way of the host graphical user interface.

26.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper the host database query includes enabling accepting from the shopper an indication of specific keywords to restrict the class of items.

27.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper the host database query includes enabling accepting from the shopper an indication of at least one category to restrict the class of items.

28.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper the host database query includes enabling accepting from the shopper an indication of a combination of keywords and at least one category to restrict the class of items.

29.   The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper the host database query includes enabling accepting

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from the shopper an indication of particular ones of the auction sites to restrict the class of items.

30. The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper the host database query includes enabling accepting from the shopper an indication of a particular type of auction site in which the shopper is interested to restrict the class of items.

31. The method according to claim 30, wherein the particular type of auction site includes person-to-person auctions and business-to-person auctions.

32. The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper the host database query includes enabling the host and the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper an indication of a time frame in which the host detects that an item within the class is available at one of the auction sites.

33. The method according to claim 25, wherein enabling the host graphical user interface to accept from the shopper the host database query includes enabling accepting from the shopper an indication of at least one of a specific price and a price range for the class of items.

34. A method for aggregating auction information from a plurality of auction sites, comprising:

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interconnecting at least one host site and the plurality of auction sites by a network;

providing a host database in communication with the host;

searching the plurality of auction sites across the network under the control of the

host;

retrieving auction information from the auction sites;

extracting data items from the auction information, the data items comprising

information associated with items offered for purchase by the auction sites; and

storing the data items within the host database.

35.   The method according to claim 34, wherein searching the plurality of auction

sites across the network under the control of the host comprises searching the plurality of

auction sites continuously on a periodic basis.

36.   The method of claim 35 further comprising updating the host database with the

data items retrieved and extracted from the auction information.

37.   The method of claim 34, wherein storing the items within the host database

comprises sorting and arranging the data items according to a hierarchy of product and

service categories established by the host.

38.   A method for searching for products or services offered for purchase by a

plurality of auction sites, comprising:

interconnecting a host site and the plurality of auction sites by a network;

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providing a host database in communication with the host;

searching the plurality of auction sites across the network under the control of the host, by at least one of matching one or more keywords for the products or services and of matching one or more of the categories associated with the products or services;

retrieving auction information from the auction sites;

extracting data items from the auction information, the data items comprising information corresponding to the products or services offered for purchase by the auction sites; and

storing the data items within the host database.

39.   The method according to claim 38, wherein the information corresponding to the products or services comprises information chosen from one of a description of the product or service description, name of auction site, and type of auction.

40.   The method according to claim 38, wherein storing the data items stored within the host database comprises storing the data items within the database according to categories established by the host.

41.   The method according to claim 40, wherein the categories established by the host are chosen from one of a product or service type and a type of auction.

42.   The method according to claim 41, wherein the categories established by the host include a hierarchy of product and service type categories and subcategories.

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43.   The method according to claim 40, wherein searching by one or more keywords can be conducted within one or more of the categories.

44.   The method according to claim 40, wherein the search by categories can be conducted within a subset of data items identified by a search by one or more keywords.

45.   A method for monitoring status of bids placed on one or more items at a plurality of auction sites in communication with a network, comprising:

interconnecting a host with the plurality of auction sites by a network;

periodically gathering with the host current bid information from the auction sites across the network for items in which a shopper has expressed interest; and

providing with the host to the shopper with a current aggregated listing of the items, and the current bid information for the items.

46.   The method according to claim 45, further comprising:

enabling the host to connect the shopper to auction sites where the shopper can place bids on the items; and

providing an indication of whether the bids placed by the shopper on the items are winning or losing.

REMARKS

This is in full and timely response to the non-final Office Action of October 29, 2002.

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